

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Monday, November 9, 2009

Wyoming Flu-Related Death Toll Climbs to Eight

According to the Wyoming Department of Health, influenza was associated with the recent deaths of two more Laramie County residents

The two men were both elderly and had underlying health conditions associated with higher risk of severe illness. One died last week; the other about three weeks ago.

These are the seventh and eighth flu-related deaths reported to the department since the emergence of H1N1 flu in Wyoming. Four reported deaths have been among residents between the ages of 19 and 64; four among residents over the age of 65.

“Due to the H1N1 flu, Wyoming continues to experience widespread flu activity at levels higher than we’ve seen over at least the last 10 typical winter flu seasons,” said Dr. Tracy Murphy, state epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health. “However, the reports from the last two weeks have indicated the growth in activity has started to slow.”

Since late May, 663 swine or H1N1 flu cases have been confirmed by the department. Of those:

- *56 were among residents younger than 5
- *349 were among residents between the ages of 5 and 18
- *253 were among residents between the ages of 19 and 64
- *5 were among residents older than 65

Over the same timeframe 3,672 cases of flu have been reported to the department overall, as well as 102 influenza-related hospitalizations. The department expects the number of actual flu infections around the state to be much higher, because most ill persons do not seek medical care or are not tested specifically for the H1N1 flu strain.

Influenza symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches and fatigue. Some patients also report diarrhea and vomiting. Actions recommended to slow the spread of illness include:

- When available, get immunized with both an H1N1 flu and a seasonal flu vaccine.
- In general, people who develop influenza-like illness should stay home from work, school or travel until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever. Those who are severely ill (such as having trouble breathing) should seek medical care.
- Avoid contact with ill persons.
- Covering noses and mouths with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing, and throwing used tissues in a trash can.
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water or the use of an alcohol-based hand gel.

More information about flu in Wyoming is available online at www.health.wyo.gov .

####